

A Consulting Proposal for Global Retirement Strategies, Inc.'s OD Remedies

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Executive Summary

In this analysis, I have delved into the challenges and solutions facing Global Retirement Strategies, Inc. (GRS) as it embarks on a significant transformation, expanding into the Latin American market and aligning its organizational culture and strategies. The complex merger of GRS and MejorVida presents a series of challenges, including market misalignment, different consumer perspectives, and a shift in organizational culture. These challenges necessitate a shift in leadership mindset and the creation of a 'Red Team' for coordination and integration. To tackle the issues, I have proposed a comprehensive analysis of the current situation and previous attempts, generated a consulting proposal with four specific plans, and evaluated the OD process, potential obstacles, and possible solutions. From job restructuring to cultural alignment, we are aiming to steer GRS toward a more harmonious and efficient future.

Current Situation and Attempts Analysis

Global Retirement Strategies, Inc. (GRS) is a long-standing life assurance company based in New York, with a mission to provide retirement income solutions to high-net-worth individuals and families. Over the years, GRS has focused on achieving profitable growth by organically increasing its market share and inorganically expanding into new markets. However, GRS is undergoing a significant transformation as it ventures into the Latin American market with new leadership and faces the challenges of integrating a recently acquired company while aligning its

organizational culture and strategies with the evolving market dynamics. The differing team cultures between the New York and Santiago offices further complicate this complex process.

Challenges and Risk

Generally speaking, GRS's current mission is to finish the merger smoothly across two cities and promote business profits, while risks occurred due to misalignment of 3 aspects: the nature of the industry, market-specific characteristics, and organizational change management strategies.

Firstly, as GRS operates in the slow-growing retirement income industry which has a long payback period, the industry lacks consumer excitement to guarantee a sudden profit boost. Secondly, the Latin American market represents a new and unfamiliar environment for GRS, with differing consumer perspectives on the pension business and strong political competition related to citizen benefits, which caused the strong regulation of the privatized pension industry by the government. These unique market characteristics have led to larger complexity and investment for GRS to arrange market entry. In addition, GRS's change management strategy focus on deal-making, rather than post-acquisition integration and strategy, has led to acquisition failures, including talent attrition and internal conflicts due to misalignment between old and new organizations.

Therefore, the challenges GRS faces can be summarized as conflicts between market characteristics company management, and business style, as well as clashes

between short-term expansion plans and the industry's slow-paced norms. Effective risk mitigation and successful integration of the MeiorVida acquisition will require a balance between the company's aggressive expansion strategy and the need for careful organizational assessment and alignment.

Current Solutions and Follow-up Issues

Solutions come with a leadership shift at GRS, which recently underwent a change with Kenneth S. taking the helm, bringing an aggressive and competitive approach to the company. He aims to shift the organizational culture from a conservative and cautious one to a more dynamic and proactive mindset and complete the acquisition in an intense period. To address the challenges, Stevens proposed the creation of a "Red Team" with three main constituencies structured for the MeiorVida deal. This approach emphasizes coordination and integration, bringing together the Corporate Center in New York, the Latin American team in Santiago, and the corporate HR OD team in New York.

However, problems arose when the New York business center pushed for rapid deal closure, while the Santiago center struggled to catch up due to regional adaptation challenges. Additionally, the OD team was marginalized as the other two teams focused on operational concerns without considering the importance of employee-related management issues.

The acquisition process required GRS to consider potential job redundancy, employee transition, and retention, functional and cultural integration between two

regional teams, etc. To tackle these challenges, GRS needs to redefine tasks and duties of core roles, structure reasonable employee dismissal and retention plans, motivate employees, address cultural differences, foster connections between teams, etc. More importantly, acquiring support from leaders with convincing materials and an acceptable budget and timeline is urgent for OD teams.

Consulting Guideline

Core Values and Ethics

While there are significant differences in the boundaries and levels of intervention between external and internal consultancy, considering that we have unlimited budget and access, we will only discuss the values and ethics that should be followed by any consultant, regardless of their authority.

Emphasis on *participation, involvement, and empowerment* for the employees who will suffer organizational change. The most ambiguous yet profound challenge that GRS faces is the difference in working styles and organizational cultures between the two city teams. Hence, we need to encourage direct employee involvement and opinion expression at all stages of organizational change. *Growth, development, and learning* should be attributes of the OD program. Organizational change resulting from new market entry should exhibit typical transferability. The process of integrating different teams to adjust organizational culture can serve as a reference for future initiatives. This value also guides the selection of our consulting models and also places demands on updating the mindsets of corporate leadership. *Valuing the*

whole person is especially important when it comes to employee dismissal and retention. The New York strategy based on performance management might have unintended consequences when dealing with the team dynamics and sense of family in the Santiago office, thus we also need to encourage *dialogue and collaboration* by formal and informal opinion collection to recognize hidden conflict. Lastly, maintaining *authenticity and trust* by both the consultant and the corporate leadership will be beneficial in balancing business benefits with organizational harmony.

Type of Consulting

Bearing in mind consulting values and differences between types of consulting, we recommend the *Organization Development model* which emphasizes the responsibilities of both consultants and corporate leadership, integration of absolute outcomes, and future dynamics. Anderson (2020) informs that clients will be less likely to implement the solutions unless they learn to see the problems themselves. GRS's issue couldn't be solved by a one-time remedy if leadership couldn't notice the possible profound impact caused by ignorance of cultural differences. Thus, our consulting process will invite leaders from different functional departments to observe and appropriate engagement.

Consulting Proposal

In general, GRS faces two pressing issues: how to smoothly handle talent adjustments during the acquisition of MeiorVida and how to achieve efficient coordination across departments and between cities. To address these challenges, we

have designed two specific plans for the initial preparation and the actual implementation phases. The initial preparation involves a restructuring of job positions and an investigation into organizational cultural differences, while the actual implementation phase includes the implementation of dismissal and engagement practices, as well as the development of cross-department and cross-city collaboration methods.

Initial Preparations

1. Restructure Current Roles

First, conduct a *job analysis* by integrating existing job descriptions of GRS and MeiorVida with the characteristics of the Latin American market. Organize *workshops* involving incumbent SEMs, recruiters, team leaders, and business department heads to clarify the post-merger team's job tasks and duties, staff numbers, responsibilities, KSAOs, etc. The *consensus document* formed should be shared with all stakeholders in the HR chain to reorganize talent recruitment plans, onboarding and training programs, performance assessment methods, feedback processes, and market-based compensation adjustment plans.

Based on this, along with the 9-box evaluation system and existing data, assess the current employment situation of the New York and Santiago teams. Identify the scope of teams and individuals for dismissal, retention, recruitment, and training enhancements. This assessment will provide guidance for the specific implementation of dismissal and engagement practices.

2. Cultural Survey

To propel employee restructure at Santiago and align workstyle and organizational norms between the two cities, understanding the cultural differences is the first and foremost step. The cultural survey aims to collect employees' views on core issues such as the work environment, the coming merger, the performance evaluation system, dismissal, and retention, as well as the real state of job status and collaboration modes as accurately as possible. We plan to employ various methods simultaneously, including questionnaires, interviews, and observation through focus group discussions.

The *questionnaires* should be anonymous to investigate employees' perceptions of DEI within the organization, sense of belonging, and the degree of work engagement. The OD team from New York will conduct *interviews* with Santiago SMEs and new employees. Additionally, under the leadership of the OD team, an observation team consisting of members from all departments within the “Red Teams”, will conduct *on-site focus group observations* of MejorVida's core business teams before the completion of the merger. This will gather firsthand information about team collaboration methods and workplace norms. This can also align cross-departments' understanding of the importance of employee-related organizational changes. Furthermore, it's important to note that *previous questionnaire archive materials* should be used as supplementary data to enhance reliability and validity.

Actual Implementations

1. Dismissal and Engagement Practices

Based on the dismissal scope defined by *Restructure Current Roles*, the OD team needs to organize *in-person meetings* with stakeholders, one-month before the acquisition information is publicly disclosed. During this meeting, employees will be informed about the dismissal situation, reasons, and compensation. Additionally, individual subjective intentions and circumstances are taken into account, considering evaluation data. For employees who are unwilling to leave, conditional *internal transfers and rehiring opportunities* can be provided based on position relevance, individual capabilities, and personal preferences. Moreover, the hiring team can offer one-month *career advisory services* starting from the employee's departure.

During the informing phase, attention should also be given to employees' social relationships within the organization based on initiative disclosure. This information can serve as a reference for motivating and engaging retained employees.

Simultaneously, the Red Team, consisting of members from the three departments, jointly conducts an *info session* to announce the dismissal situation and subsequent company support resources. In addition, open pipelines for questions and feedback need to be emphasized, providing all employees with the opportunity for *direct dialogue* with team managers and the OD team. This approach aims to minimize the negative atmosphere resulting from misunderstandings and demonstrate GRS's sense of responsibility.

2. Cross-department and Cross-city Reconciliation

Cultural reconciliation is arguably one of the lengthiest and most challenging-to-quantify processes in organizational development. However, it is also one of the most subtle and profoundly influential aspects. Reconciliation across departments and cities shares similar logistics. The core of this plan lies in its openness, proactiveness, and long-term perspective.

Both *info sessions* and *DEI training* can assist stakeholders in maintaining an open attitude toward each other's job content, objectives, collaboration methods, and organizational culture, and even foster initiative in understanding. Connection workshops between different departments and informal team-building activities can deepen individual-level collaboration habits, promote cross-team cooperation, and enhance employees' sense of belonging to the organization.

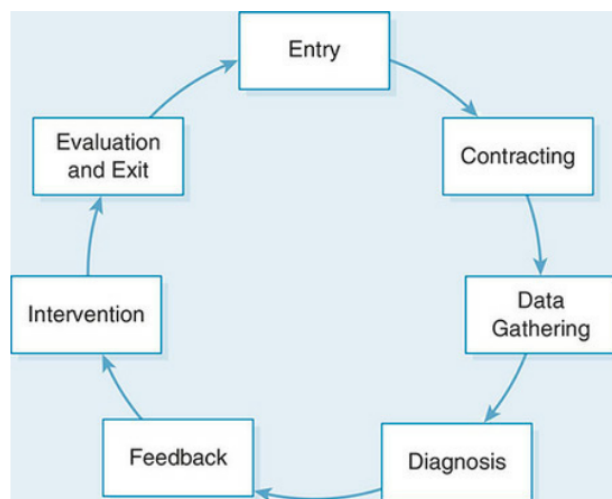
The cultural survey process essentially promotes alignment among leadership across teams and cities. In the actual implementation, a similar approach can be used to gradually extend practices within the organization. GRS can organize *quarterly seminars* in both cities, allowing teams from both locations to share and exchange experiences in person. This offers an opportunity to experience each other's work culture, foster collaboration and mutual learning.

OD Process, Potential Obstacles and Solutions

Based on the four strategies outlined in the *Consulting Proposal* across two key phrases, we will analyze GRS's OD implementation process and potential obstacles from five perspectives (see Figure 1): entry and contracting, data gathering, diagnosis and feedback, intervention, and evaluation and exit. (see Table 1) Foreseeing the crucial milestones and obstacles can enlarge the opportunity for the success of GRS's organizational changes.

Figure 1

OD Process



Note. Entry, contracting, diagnosis, and feedback are combined into two steps in Table 1. Sourcing from Anderson (2020).

Table 1

GRS's OD Process, Obstacles and Solutions

OD Step	Instructions	Potential Obstacles	Possible Solutions
Entry and Contracting	Initiate ethical entry	N/A	N/A
	Define the scope of work to be accomplished in	N/A	N/A

	addressing GRS's challenges		
Data Gathering	Gather relevant data about the situation, clients, and the organization	“Red Team” marginalizes OD team may reduce implement efficiency	Beforehand meeting with stakeholders from “Red Team”
	Integrate JDs and characteristics of the Latin American market	Confidentiality on market information, as it may relate to acquisition operational process	Cooperate with Santiago team leader
	Employ various methods, including questionnaires, interviews, in person observation, and archive materials, etc.	Carry out different work streams simultaneously requires duties clarification and efficient collaboration	Assign groups with 2-3 people from OD teams to different work streams
			Flexible daily meetings across groups and with leaders based on demands
		Reliability issue due to SDR*	Combine real-time data and archive materials
Diagnosis and Feedback	Analyze and interpret data	Cultural survey may have vague or subtle results	Choose questionnaires with high validity and reliability
			Engage raters with different background to interpret results
	Engage in a dialogue with the stakeholders and CEO to make sense of feedback	N/A	N/A
	Reevaluate the problem and gather additional data if necessary	N/A	N/A
Intervention	Inform intervention schedules to stakeholders	N/A	N/A

	Implement according to timeline	Accidental delay on implementation	Change schedules according to priority and accessibility
Evaluation and Exit	Evaluate the outcomes of the interventions	N/A	N/A
	Continuously refine the intervention strategies as needed	Lack of long-term influence	Monthly pulse-check with managers, SMEs, etc. in the first half-year after acquisition

Note. SDR, socially desirable responding. This table only informs the crucial potential obstacles.*

In conclusion, by dissecting GRS's OD process and potential obstacles through these five perspectives, we aim to enhance the likelihood of successful organizational change. Identifying crucial milestones and potential challenges will enable GRS to navigate the path to transformation with greater efficacy and agility. In the ever-evolving landscape of organizational development, staying prepared for potential roadblocks can help steer GRS toward its desired outcomes. With each step carefully planned and adjusted as needed, we believe GRS can chart a course toward a more harmonious and efficient future.